

## **Consular Leadership Day**

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007, all 37 staff members of U.S. Embassy Dhaka's consular section met off-site on the occasion of Consular Leadership Day. This event is observed at U.S. diplomatic missions around the world, and gives our employees a chance to step back from the daily routine to focus on broader leadership and management issues. A team consisting of consular officers, locally employed staff, and family member employees started planning Dhaka's events months in advance, and the result was a day full of teambuilding activities and discussions focused on enhancing our customer service.

The Embassy's Chargé d'Affaires, Geeta Pasi, kicked the day off by describing some of her experiences as a consular officer in Bucharest, Romania. The stories she told echoed what we see in Dhaka on a daily basis, including an emphasis on every consular section's core mission, helping American citizens in distress. In Bangladesh these services have run the gamut from helping ill Americans return to the United States, visiting U.S. citizen prisoners in local jails, and registering the births and deaths of Americans abroad.

In small group discussions, staff members brainstormed ideas for improving the services we provide to our customers and enhancing our own professional capabilities. One new idea was to increase the cross-training our staff members do, both to make the job more interesting for them, and to ensure that all our services can be provided at times of short staffing, such as during the recent general strikes in Bangladesh. We also acknowledged our successes, such as keeping up with an ever increasing workload at a time when our staffing has remained fairly consistent.

The afternoon was spent focusing on how we can use the tools of public diplomacy to tell the story of the consular section to the broader public. Working in small groups, each person was able to participate in making an outreach video, come up with ideas for advertising our services to the public, and write portions of an article describing the work our section does. This was a great reminder that consular sections conduct some of the most visible and most intensely watched work in any Embassy, and that all staff members have a role to play in getting our message across positively.

The consular section is a busy and sometimes stressful place to work, but our staff agrees that we treat each other like family, sharing our triumphs and frustrations on a daily basis, as well as our hopes for the future. Consular Leadership Day gave us the chance to focus on the future, and on ways to best meet the ever expanding needs of our customers.

2/14/07

## Consular Leadership Day Photos

